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BOSTON BOARD OF TRADE.

# REPORT

OF

Committee on Bureau of Clothing

AND

## EQUIPMENTS.

ADOPTED MARCH 7th, 1862.



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BOSTON, BOARD OF TRADE.

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COMMITTEE ON BUREAU OF CLOTHING

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BOSTON:

PRINTED BY ALFRED MUDGE & SON, 34 SCHOOL STREET.

1862.



## BOSTON BOARD OF TRADE.

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THE Committee appointed at a special meeting of the Government of this Board, on the 18th of November, 1861, and re-appointed on the 3d of February, 1862, to inquire into the expediency of applying to M. C. Meigs, Quartermaster-General of the United States Army, to establish a Bureau of Clothing and Equipment for New England, with headquarters at Boston, deeply sensible of the importance of the subject, have endeavored to perform the duty assigned to them with fidelity and intelligence; and now present you with a record of their doings, for the purpose, principally, of soliciting your advice as relates to their future action.

On the 23d of November, we addressed Gen. Meigs, in nearly the following words:

“The water power of the Merrimac and Saco alone is sufficient to supply the clothing for one hundred millions of people. The genius of Northern men leads them to invent and to improve every kind of machinery. The climate and soil of the North forbid either large or profitable investments in agriculture, and thus the inhabitants of New England, by the very necessities of their position and condition, are compelled to work wool and cotton and leather, and to build and employ

ships. As relates to manufacturing, by an experience which has cost many millions of dollars, we claim that in skill, in perfection of machinery, in system, and in economy, the New England States are in advance of any other States of the Union. So, too, we claim that the woolens and cottons produced in these States can be made into garments in large quantities, and quite a profit cheaper than elsewhere. As this is the material point, you will permit us to state well ascertained facts.

“The making of clothing in New England is not, as in some other sections, a regular, but, as a rule, an incidental business. The cost of the railroads which terminate in Boston, is fifty-four millions of dollars; and by means of these roads, and expressmen to the most remote towns and villages, the wives and daughters of mechanics, farmers and fishermen, are continually supplied with fabrics by the dealers in clothing here; and these females, using the needle in their leisure hours only, are able to work at prices which would not allow professed seamstresses to subsist. To ‘put out’ cloths in this way has been the usual practice for years, and the quality of clothing thus made, has given to this city the highest reputation in the markets of the South and the West. The value of the woollen and cotton garments sold in Boston, in the year 1856, was quite twelve millions of dollars. At the present moment, a single house keeps fifty-seven male ‘cutters,’ and upwards of five thousand female ‘sewers’ and ‘trimmers,’ in constant employment. The army contracts in New England—as we apprehend—are much less than in New York and Pennsylvania; yet, we are satisfied that



more than twenty-five thousand females are now busy in our cities, villages, and farm-houses. We are certain, also, that another twenty-five thousand need work to eke out comfortable subsistence, if not, indeed, to prevent suffering. A Boston clothing house lately advertised for a hundred additional ‘sewers,’ and soon had more than a thousand applicants. Judge, sir, from this incident, of the number of females in Massachusetts, Maine, and the other Northern States, who daily look into the columns of ‘WANTED’ in the newspapers. Still further, a Bureau of Clothing and Equipment in New England, with headquarters at Boston, would save the expense of transport of the cloths which are sent to New York and Philadelphia for inspection, and which are returned to the contractors for clothing in this city—an item, we need not say, of considerable amount.

“We find another element of cheapness in the proximity of Boston to Lowell, Manchester, Lawrence, and other manufacturing cities; since, in common with practical men generally, we hold to the “making-up” of goods as near the point of production as possible. Allow us next, sir, to call your attention to the subject of army shoes. In 1856, the manufacture of boots and shoes in Massachusetts alone, was 44,308,302 pairs, of the value of \$37,468,355. A very large part was ‘pegged work;’ nor have our manufacturers yet changed to an extent that is desirable. But, as there is, probably, more machinery in motion in this Commonwealth than in any other State of the Union; and, as our people adapt themselves to circumstances with won-

derful facility, we think it entirely safe to remark, that in a year's time, our shoe towns could provide for an army of half a million, of as good materials and workmanship, and at a lower price, than elsewhere; for in this case, as in the making of clothing, females are employed to do the 'closing' and 'binding.' In conclusion, sir,—and with distinct emphasis—we pronounce that we have no wish to interfere with the just claims of any of our sister States. New England has furnished her proportion of men and money to prevent the dismemberment of our common country, and asks in return that those of her people who remain at home shall be allowed a proper share of the work for the immense army, that, in this awful juncture, has been placed in the field. Boston is the second commercial city in the United States, and may of right—we are constrained to aver—may of right—claim to be placed on an equality, in this behalf, with New York, Philadelphia, and Cincinnati. In the name of the eight hundred members of this Board, we transmit you this Memorial, in the earnest hope that for the reasons we have given, you will take immediate measures to establish here a Bureau of Clothing and Equipment, not only for the benefit of the Government, but to help the wives and daughters of mechanics, farmers, fishermen, and day-laborers, of the six Northeastern States.”

Such was our Memorial. More than three months have elapsed without an official reply. It should be stated, however, that Gen. Meigs, in an interview at Washington, late in December, with Mr. Lincoln, a member of your Committee, expressed his inclination to comply



with our wishes, but said that his inability to detail a proper officer to act as the head of the Bureau, was an obstacle at the moment; and to do full justice to the Quartermaster-General, we add, that the same reason has since been given to all others who have reported to us conversations with him on the subject. The matter stands now, therefore, as at the beginning. Meanwhile, army cloths and other goods furnished the Government under contracts here, continue to be sent for inspection to New York and Philadelphia, where, owing to the press of business and other causes, they remain week after week without examination, to the serious injury of our merchants and manufacturers, and even to the Government itself; while thousands and thousands of women continue to need employment.

This condition of things, your Committee venture to believe, ought no longer to exist, since New England does but claim to be placed on an equal footing with the Middle and Western States: and, surely, we may assume that if the burthens of the war are to be equally borne, the direct and incidental benefits of the war are to be shared, as nearly as may be, on the same principle.

At this point we are to be met, possibly, with the remark that the rebellion will soon be suppressed, and that a Bureau of Clothing and Equipment, on the return of peace, will be of inconsiderable importance. To this — with all deference — we reply that, *whatever* shall happen in the future, the army and navy of the United States — unless our statesmen utterly forget the lesson of the present hour — must, of necessity,

be much larger than at any past period of our history. But, whether the war come to an end in three months or in three years, or, whether we maintain a great or small force on land and sea, after restoring the integrity of the Union, is a matter of no consequence for the purposes of this report, simply because, be the supply of clothing and of equipments to the army and navy, little or much, we insist upon a *just proportion of that supply* for the Northeastern States as a right which belongs to them, and one which should never be relinquished.

The utterance of these sentiments brings your Committee to the consideration of a question of some delicacy. The course of the Government of this Board in the matters of commerce, navigation, and finance, as concern communications with Departments of the Federal Government, since the fall of Sumter, may well be omitted as not pertinent to this occasion: but, as relates to manufactures, it is of moment to observe that, when informed of an order to Europe to purchase army cloths, a correspondence was opened with the Quartermaster-General by telegraph, which in the end, by despatches and letters, become somewhat elaborate, and which was concluded with the utmost good feeling on both sides. Indeed, the record of the Committee appointed to adopt measures in the case (at discretion) and the report of Mr. Bond, who was deputed to proceed to Washington, make honorable and frequent mention of the courtesy, the devotion to duty, and the admirable business qualities of Gen. Meigs, to which the Government of this Board gave unqualified assent.

and which, we now gladly recall, and record anew. Yet, and with entire respect for the judgment and character of that distinguished officer, duty to this section of the country compels us to counsel steady perseverance in the endeavor to obtain at his hands, a participation in the benefits of his Department, in the manner so often indicated in this Report.

The modes of action which readily suggest themselves are two, namely, a second direct appeal to Gen. Meigs himself, or an address to the members of both Houses of Congress from the Northeastern States, asking for their influence with Gen. Meigs to grant our request, which, upon the calmest view, is important not merely to the largest but to all of these States as well as to the Federal Government.

Your Committee, in conclusion, refrain from recommendations, preferring rather, under the circumstances of the case, to ask your advice as to their future proceedings.

Respectfully submitted,

GARDNER BREWER,  
F. W. LINCOLN, JR.,  
GEO. WM. BOND,  
GEO. C. RICHARDSON,  
JAS. C. CONVERSE.

*Office Board Trade, Boston, March 6, 1862.*

OFFICE BOARD OF TRADE, }  
 Boston, March 7, 1862. }

Special Meeting of the Government of this Board at 1 o'clock P. M., this day, for the purpose of acting upon the foregoing Report. The attendance was greater than on any former occasion for four years.

Present, the

*President.*

EDWARD S. TOBEY.

*Vice Presidents.*

JAMES C. CONVERSE,

CHARLES G. NAZRO.

GEORGE C. RICHARDSON,

*Of the Committee on Appeals.*

WILLIAM PERKINS,

WILLIAM B. SPOONER,

GEORGE B. UPTON,

*Of the Committee on Arbitration.*

BENJAMIN E. BATES,

SOLOMON R. SPAULDING,

FREDERIC W. LINCOLN, JR.,

*Of the Committee upon Inquiry into the Causes of Shipwreck.*

CHARLES J. MORRILL,

P. ADAMS AMES,

DAVID D. STACKPOLE.

*Of Committee on Finance.*

AUGUSTUS FLAGG,

JOSEPH S. ROPES,

GERRY W. COCHRANE,

*Directors.*

THOMAS ASPINWALL,

HENRY J. GARDNER,

SAMUEL ATHERTON,

SAMUEL H. GOOKIN,

EDWARD ATKINSON,

WILLIAM HILTON,

JAMES H. BEAL,

J. B. KIMBALL,



CHARLES BOCKUS,  
 GEORGE WM. BOND,  
 GARDNER BREWER,  
 ERASTUS B. BIGELOW,  
 CYRUS DUPEE,  
 ARTHUR L. DEVENS,  
 EZRA FARNSWORTH,  
 JOSEPH S. FAY,

ABNER KINGMAN,  
 AMMI C. LOMBARD,  
 FRANCIS C. MANNING,  
 OTIS NORCROSS,  
 CHARLES W. SCUDDER,  
 WILLIAM THOMAS,  
 JOHN H. THORNDIKE,  
 SAMUEL H. WALLEY.

The Report was read, discussed, slightly amended, and as here printed, unanimously adopted, with directions to transmit a copy thereof to General M. C. Meigs, Quartermaster-General of the United States Army.

Attest.

LORENZO SABINE,

*Secretary.*







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